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REDUCING LIVESTOCK LOSSES

from

#323

Larkspur
POISONING

in the
Western States



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REDUCING LIVESTOCK LOSSES

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Larkspur
POISONING

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Larkspur probably causes more cattle losses in the western range States than any other poisonous plant. Losses in sheep or horses rarely occur.

These plants are commonly called tall larkspurs or low larkspurs, depending on their size and growth habits. Although all larkspur is poisonous, some species seldom, if ever, cause cattle losses. Three of the most poisonous species are *Delphinium barbeyi*, tall larkspur, *D. nelsonii* and *D. tricorne*, low larkspurs.

Tall larkspurs reach their poisonous peak during early summer, but may continue to be dangerous until after maturity in the fall. Low larkspurs are poisonous throughout the life of the plant.

Cattle usually feed on larkspur because good forage is scarce. Losses are apt to be heavy if animals are allowed on larkspur ranges before good forage has made sufficient growth.

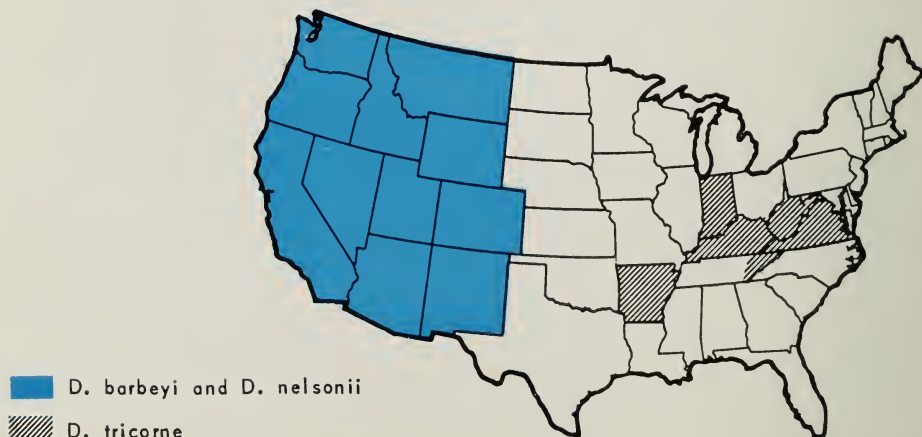
All plant parts, especially the leaves, are poisonous. The toxic substance is an alkaloid.

Where and When It Grows

Tall larkspurs grow on the higher ranges at elevations of 7,000 to 11,000 feet; they are common in moist areas on mountain ranges, under aspen, and along streams.

Low larkspurs are found on open hillsides and in parks at elevations of 8,000 feet and below; they are common on foothills and sagebrush ranges.

DISTRIBUTION OF LARKSPUR





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Tall larkspurs grow up to 5 feet tall, and look like the garden flower delphinium. The flowers are blue, and the leaves are broad and divided into segments.

Low larkspurs grow up to 2 feet tall. Like tall larkspurs, the flowers are blue, but the leaves are divided into finer, narrower segments.



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The plant is a perennial and belongs to the crowfoot family.

Tall larkspurs usually start growth in May or June, depending on elevation. Low larkspurs start


growth in early spring, and usually mature by June or early July. When they mature, leaves dry up.

How It Affects Livestock

An animal may be poisoned if it eats a relatively small amount of larkspur in a short period. One-

half pound of the more toxic species per 100 pounds of animal weight may cause poisoning.

The following are symptoms of larkspur poisoning:

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1. Staggering
 2. Falling
 3. Nausea
 4. Excessive salivation
 5. Frequent swallowing
 6. Quivering of muscles
 7. Retardation of heart action
 8. Paralysis of respiratory centers

How To Reduce Livestock Losses

Livestock losses can be reduced by keeping cattle off larkspur ranges until forage is available. In dangerous areas, animals should be fenced out of dense patches.

There is no simple effective treatment for larkspur poisoning. Placing an affected animal on a slope with its head uphill may prevent bloating.

Eradication of larkspur in large areas is not practicable. Larkspur can be controlled in small areas by grubbing or by treating the plants with a herbicide, such as 2,4,5-T. To prevent further growth, the crown as well as the tops must be removed or treated. Followup treatments are necessary each year until the plants are destroyed.

Where To Obtain More Information

You can obtain more detailed information on larkspur poisoning by getting in touch with your county agricultural agent or by writing to your State agricultural experiment station or to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Consult your local

veterinarian if you have any questions regarding affected animals. *Note:* The map on page 2 shows areas where most livestock poisoning has been reported. It is possible that larkspur grows in other areas.

Know Poisonous Plants • Reduce Livestock Losses

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